

CHAPTER XV THE
PASSAGE FROM THE WORLD

" Al cielo e ritornata La
Sposaa al BUO Sposo, L'
amorosa a l' amoroso,
Et a l'* amante l'
amata."

Neri di Landoccio, *In Lauds delta Serafica
ferguie,*

ALL this while, Catherine's life was being slowly consumed in the burning fire of her love for the Church ; in her, indeed, had the word of the Psalmist been fulfilled to the letter : *The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.* These months in Rome had been for her a time of intense agony, physical and mental, of impassioned labour by word and deed, while her bodily infirmities increased continually, until she seemed no longer to resemble a living being.

Towards the close of 1379, Catherine had moved with her spiritual family from the Rione della Colonna, and hoped soon to return to Siena. <f We have taken a house near San Biagio," she wrote, on December 4, to Neri di Landoccio, who was still at Naples, " between the Campo de' Fiori and Sant' Eustachio, and we think to return before Easter, by the grace of God." ¹ This was the house near the Minerva, in the present Via S. Chiara, where her cell is now venerated as a chapel, and it was here that her last mysterious illness came upon her. Here she endured that prolonged torment of soul and body, offering up herself as a willing victim to her Divine Bridegroom. To those that loved her, and stood by her side during these months from January 30, the Monday after Sexagesima Sunday, when her last agony began, until April 29, the Sunday before the

¹ Letter in the Casanatenae MS. 2422. "Di frate Raimondo abbiamo buone novelle, che egli sta bene, et lavora molto forte per la santa Chiesa."